

NEWS RELEASE

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New campaign to raise awareness of tougher state law, possible federal prosecution of violent criminals with guns

July 24, 2017 | To raise awareness of tougher state penalties and possible federal prosecution for violent criminals in possession of a gun, the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission and the City of Memphis recently launched a marketing campaign to warn would-be offenders about the changes.

The 'Fed Up' campaign reflects the community's lack of tolerance for violent crime – and also describes a heightened commitment to pursue prosecutions of violent criminals in the federal court system, where penalties can be more severe.

"We're fed up. The citizens of Memphis are fed up with the type of senseless violent crime that claims lives and puts everyone's quality of life at risk," Mayor **Jim Strickland** said. "This campaign will put violent criminals on notice — you'll get a minimum of eight years in state prison for just having a gun, and when possible we'll seek justice through our federal courts."

The new state law, sponsored by Senate Majority Leader **Mark Norris** and passed this spring, increases the penalty for a convicted felon with a firearm if the prior conviction is for a violent crime or drug trafficking. With this tool in place, District Attorney General **Amy Weirich** and Acting U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee **Lawrence J. Laurenzi** have reaffirmed their commitment to prosecute violent criminal in possession of a gun at the federal level.

"The U.S. Attorney's Office, along with our partners, will use every lawful tool we have to take violent offenders off our streets," Laurenzi said. "We are coming after you. If you choose to illegally possess a firearm, you could be facing up to life in federal prison."

Said Weirich: "For those who choose to hide behind a gun to bully and rob our law-abiding citizens, you will be disarmed, prosecuted and punished to the full extent of the law. Your new lifestyle will be a very unpleasant one. There is no better time than now to put the guns down and stop the violence."

The campaign was based on a recommendation from the Memphis Shelby County Crime Commission's Operation Safe Community 3 plan. This recommendation was based on research conducted by the University of Memphis' Center for Community Criminology and Research, which showed that a previous campaign, "Gun Crime is Jail Time," was successful in helping to drive down violent crime. Trust Marketing, the same firm that developed the first campaign, developed the "Fed Up" campaign.

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Mayor Jim Strickland

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